



Acton Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

August 16, 2021

7:30 P.M.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS VIA ZOOM

Present:

Virtual Members Present: William McInnis -Chairman, Mark Conoby, Joanne Bissetta and Michael Kreuze, Dr. William Taylor was not present.

Virtual Associate Members Present: Dr. Thomas Jacoby was present and voted for absent Dr. William Taylor. Dr. Rekha Singh was not present.

Virtual Staff Present: Sheryl Ball-Health Director

Virtual Present: James Cogan, Kim Kastens, Diann Oster, Danielle Savin, Peter Light, Anita Arnum and Eva Szkaradek

1. Opening

Chair - William McInnis opened the meeting at 7:35 P.M. A script was read that was provided by the Town stating why the meetings are virtual during this pandemic.

2. Regular Business

Face Coverings

Ms. Ball updated the Board regarding face coverings with both the Mass Department of Public Health guidance and the CDC guidance. For fully vaccinated, both organizations ask that a mask be worn in indoors especially if you are at high risk

COVID -19 Vaccine Booster Recommendations

Ms. Ball outlined the current guidance regarding booster shots and listed the current list of people who are recommended to receive.

Locations for shots – Ms. Ball stated that as of today, Kmart is available for use as a mass vaccination site until it changes hands. However, we are hearing that both doctor's offices and pharmacies will be offering the shots rather than through Mass sites.

Nursing Service Director Updates-

Ms. York stated that numbers are going up and mentioned that we have had 1027 cases since the beginning of the pandemic, 10 currently on isolation, 985 recovered and 32 fatalities and currently only one case of delta variant. Ms. York mentioned that testing sites are doing random testing for sequencing of the variants and typically only for areas where clusters have been



identified or high risk locations. The sequencing results, unfortunately take a couple of weeks for us to receive. In this last month since we have begun to see positive cases again, we have had 43 positive cases and 58% are break thru cases and 42% are unvaccinated. Ms. York stated that both Anita Arnum and Jill Salomon have continued to conduct vaccine clinics especially for homebound and our congregate care facilities. Vaccination rates for Acton are currently at 74% minus those that are not eligible. Our population of 16-19 is approximately 95% vaccinated which says a lot the safety of our school community and our lowest population is the 20-29 year olds which is at 76%. Ms. York also mentioned that Life Care has had 198 days since their last positive case and 97% of their residents are fully vaccinated and 92.5% of the staff is fully vaccinated. They are also following current visitation guidelines outlined by the State. Bench mark at Senior Living has had one positive case on August 4th and all residents were tested on two occasions, 1 week apart and thankfully the testing pools came back negative. Bench mark at Senior Living has also mandated vaccination for staff except for those with medical or religious exemption and there is currently 6 staff that has sought that exception.

Ms. York also mentioned the new quarantine guidance that the State is following which now requires that they document any direct contacts of a positive case that are fully vaccinated. Ms. York indicated that her and her staff are spending time to educate those direct contacts as to what symptoms they need to watch for. We are seeing very minor symptoms from those that are vaccinated. Ms. York is happy that the new guidance requires us to document close contacts of positive cases as we are seeing break through cases in Acton. Ms. York also stated that our percent positivity rate has decreased in the last week. The Board asked about hospital rates and Ms. York stated that two (2) unvaccinated were hospitalized and none that were vaccinated. The Board also asked about trends and Ms. York stated there are no full households and we are not seeing the spread throughout the household like we did previously. Ms. York also stated that she is not seeing trends. The Board also asked about the specific age group or activity of positive cases and Ms. York stated they range through all age groups. The Board also inquired about reaching out to those in need and those that may not speak English as a first language and Ms. York stated that both Anita and Jill are doing a great job. Residents of the community want to know if there are cases of unvaccinated positive cases in residents under the age of 12 and Ms. York stated yes. They also asked if we are seeing trends in breakthrough cases who may have received a certain vaccine. Ms. York does not have that data. Ms. York also spoke to how random the cases have been recently.

Face coverings - Discussion

The Board mentioned that other communities in different environments are now requiring face coverings while indoors, whether vaccinated or not and/or a combination of both. The Board discussed whether or not to implement an order or continue to follow the State's guidance or if they should consider an Acton mandate. The Board discussed both the State and the CDC face covering guidance which basically states that everyone is advised to wear a face covering indoors regardless of vaccination status. The Board asked if there are any Acton unique situations that could require us to take additional actions. The Board was polled and decided that we should continue to follow the MDPH guidance until such a time that Acton's situation changes because currently we have a high percentage of vaccinated residents as well as a decrease in our percent positivity over the last week. The Board did ask staff to continue to



follow the State's recommendations and asked that this be scheduled for discussion at future meetings. The Board also asked staff to highly recommend face coverings to our residents while indoors and support those businesses that have required them. The Board also asked staff to send out educational materials to our residents through various media channels.

Public Hearing – Acton Board of Health Rules and Regulations Article 11 & 16

Mr. McInnis declared the public hearing that was continued from June 7th and July 12th open. Ms. Ball stated that additional language, including Zone A, name change and further definitions of public and semipublic waters, variance and severability language and semi-public water supply and surface waters have been added to the proposed draft for Board review. Ms. Ball stated that Article 11 is unchanged from the last reiteration and outlined the changes that were made to Article 16. The Board asked if there was public comment and there was none.

On a motion made by Mr. Conoby, seconded by Ms. Bissetta the Board voted to close the public hearing for Article 11. The chair took roll call and all were in favor.

On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Dr. Jacoby, the Board unanimously voted to accept the changes as noted to Article 11. The chair took roll call and all were in favor.

On a motion made by Mr. Conoby, seconded by Dr. Jacoby, the Board unanimously voted to close the public hearing for Article 16. The chair took roll call and all were in favor.

On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Mr. Kreuze, the Board unanimously voted to accept the changes as noted to Article 16. The chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Central Mass. Mosquito Control Project - Update

Mr. Tim Deschamps from CMMCP was present to provide an update to the Board. Mr. Deschamps stated that larval control began in late March and to date, 134 inspections have been conducted and 35 sites have been treated to prevent emergence of adult mosquitoes. Also, they have received requests from 418 residents to spray. Mr. Deschamps also stated that they have a tire recycle program and asked us to spread the word. Mr. Deschamps stated that so far all tested mosquitoes have not identified West Nile or Triple A and further stated that we have had unusual weather patterns this year which has forced them to switch gears to help suppress the mosquito population. The Board asked about both West Nile and EEE and Mr. Deschamps stated that West Nile has not been found in Acton and no cases of EEE to date in Massachusetts. The Board also asked about what bait is used in the traps and Mr. Deschamps stated that they primarily use Co2 traps. Mr. Deschamps also stated that he expects the mosquito population to stay active another 4-6 weeks or until the weather cools down. The Board asked Mr. Deschamps if the State is collecting deceased birds anymore and Mr. Deschamps stated that are not.



Polystyrene Ban

Ms. Ball stated that there are two residents here tonight to speak to the Board about the proposed polystyrene and disposable plastic reduction ban as well as legislation to charge ten cents for bags to encourage users to bring their own reusable bags and are seeking Board support for an upcoming town meeting warrant article. Ms. Carolyn Platt went through the proposal with the Board via a PowerPoint presentation and asked the Board to recommend both of the proposed articles and for the health division to serve as the enforcement agency. Ms. Platt further stated the Select board has recommended both of these articles. Ms. Platt stated that these proposed articles had the same wording that other cities and towns have used. Ms. Platt further stated that they are proposing this bylaw to regulate the use of polystyrene and single use plastic that are a potential threat to our health and polluting our future. Ms. Platt also stated that they are made from fossil fuels and are contributing to climate change and there are safe reliable alternatives that they will educate our restaurants and retailers to use instead. The second article is authorizing the Select board to petition the general court to adopt legislation to charge 10 cents for each checkout bag and this money will go to the retailers. She also stated that all three of our grocery stores have facilities in other towns that have already implemented this bylaw so they are familiar with it. They also plan to spend significant time educating and communicating with our businesses and if approved would like to give businesses approximately 6 months to implement. The Board discussed the polystyrene collection that is happening at the transfer station once monthly but were told they don't collect food waste. The Board asked staff to reach out to the business community to seek comments for a future discussion. The Board also asked what source they used for this article and questioned some of the science that was used, relating to polystyrene being a carcinogen and the impact to global warming and asked the group to conduct additional research and bring to them for a future discussion. The Board asked for the petitioners to get this information and, as well as analysis of alternatives and feedback from the business community and ask to be rescheduled at a future meeting.

Minutes

On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Mr. Conoby, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of July 12, 2021. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Next Meeting

The next BOH meeting is scheduled for August 30, 2021.

4. Adjournment

On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Mr. Conoby, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:17 PM. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

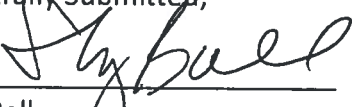
Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting;

- Town of Acton script for boards and committees opening meeting
- Board of Health agenda
- Proposed changes to Article 11 & 16




- Polystyrene and disposable plastic reduction draft and memo to Select board re: Charge for bags
- Minutes of 7-12-2021

Respectfully Submitted,



Sheryl Ball
Acton Board of Health



William McInnis- Chairman,
Acton Board of Health

